

## **Iowa Commission On Latino Affairs**

A Division of the Department of Human Rights

September 2002

The Iowa Commission on Latino Affairs (ICLA) seeks to assure positive and healthy understanding of the social, cultural and economic contributions Latino Citizens make to Iowa. ICLA links Iowa Latino Citizens to state government and seeks to assure equality for Iowa Latinos through advocacy, education and information. ICLA promotes full participation of Iowa Latino Citizens in their local communities' economic, social, educational and local government to network and break barriers of communication and bring cultural awareness as well as learning about American culture.

The Iowa Commission on Latino Affairs was made a statutory agency in 1976 after a couple of years as the Spanish-Speaking Task Force. When the Iowa Department of Human Rights was created under the reorganization of state government in 1986, the Spanish-Speaking People's Commission became housed in this newly formed department. In 1990, the name of the Division and Commission was changed to Latino Affairs. The Department of Human Rights is composed of seven Commissions that are autonomous. The Commission is composed of nine citizens appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Iowa State Senate for two-year terms on the Commission. Serving as *ex officio* is the Director of the Department of Human Rights. ICLA's Administrator is appointed and confirmed by the Iowa State Senate. She and two other staff members, interns and grant-funded positions, are responsible for implementing the program and policy as determined by the Commission.

The ICLA Iowa Code states that we shall ***coordinate, assist, and cooperate with efforts of state departments and agencies to serve the needs of Latino persons in the fields of education, employment, health, housing, welfare and recreation. To stimulate public awareness of problems Latino persons and conducting a program of public education and encouraging the governor and the general assembly to develop programs to deal with these problems.*** These mandates are implemented through public state hearings held throughout the state on issues and concerns Latino Citizens have in the areas mentioned above. Outreach to the Iowa Latino Communities and connection to State Government is the vehicle used to carry out this mandate. Sharing and distributing the data collected to service providers, educators, state and private agencies who work with Latino Citizens, local, state and national governments through our ICLA Communication Systems, our Annual Report and is posted on our Website. Partnering with other state agencies ( DHS, DPH, Iowa Workforce Development, DHR Divisions, Department of Education, Economic Development, Secretary of State, etc.) that travel the state has helped ICLA offset the budget cost with this program by sharing state vehicles. Advocacy for Iowa Latinos regarding the above mentioned issues is an on-going activity which includes research and studies in the following areas: language barriers, educational barriers, healthcare, justice, housing, hate crimes against Latinos, predatory lending, economic and employment issues and immigration issues. Providing diversity training, education, information and prevention intervention is another channel utilized by ICLA staff and Commission to address these mandates.

Other ICLA mandates are:

***To develop, coordinate, and assist other public organizations that serve Latino citizens.***

ICLA developed the ***Latino Service Providers Coalition***, which is an organization composed of area service providers who meet every 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of the month to discuss, present and promote services for the Latino community. This coalition helps find services, promote and assist the development of programs and services to meet the needs, concerns and issues of the Latino community (for example, finding Spanish-speaking doctors, mentoring and tutoring programs for Latino Children, medical services for uninsured Latino children and families, etc.) ***The ICLA Website*** has become a major resource center for providing information pertinent to and about Iowa Latino Communities which is utilized by anyone and everyone who is seeking assistance, education, cultural awareness, cultural events, Latino organizations, Latino businesses, markets, economics, stats, census information, Latino demographics, Latino web links, health care, other Latino resources, etc. The ICLA Website is updated weekly. ICLA ***partners, supports and networks*** with all Iowa Latino Groups, and Organizations that seek to promote positive and helpful programs, events, trainings, conferences, etc. for Iowa Latinos. (Immigrants Rights Network, Center for New Community, Hispanic Educational Resources, Latino Leadership Program, Latino Advocacy Center, Perry, IA, Diversity Committees throughout Iowa, Latinos Unidos, Latino Educational Advisory Groups, Midwest Educational Services, New Iowan Welcome Centers, Latino Chamber of Commerce to name a few) These organizations help to set up and promote our Latino Statewide Public Hearings.

***To evaluate existing programs and proposed legislation affecting Latino persons and propose new programs.***

ICLA has received a federal grant to develop and implement a substance abuse and mental health model of treatment for Latino children ages 12-18. ICLA is the only agency in Iowa who received such a grant from SAMSA (The Substance Abuse and Mental Services Administration), affirming our research leading to the recognition of the need in our Latino Communities and supported by local mental healthcare providers. It is called ***Latino Wraparound Service Project***. Phase one of the grant was the development, we are now in phase two, implementation and Phase three will be the development of the self-sustaining program. More information about this project is on our ICLA Website. We were also approved for a grant from the ***National Council of La Raza***, for a voter registration and education program specifically for Latino Citizens in Iowa and will work with the Secretary of State Chet Culver to develop and implement the program. Future grants and programs are currently being researched in the areas of Latino history and cultural educational curriculum, Latino Elderly needs, community based mentoring and youth centers, keeping our Latino youth in school and working with Latina girls ages 12-18.

***To conduct training programs for Latino persons to enable them to assume leadership positions on the community level.*** ICLA is participating and supporting the development of the ***Iowa Political Agenda***. This is a group of Latino Citizens from all areas and walks of life, that will define goals, objectives and priorities for Iowa Latino citizens by identifying Latino issues, concerns and proactive activities to build

community and organize to bring healthy, strong and valuable agendas to determine the political agendas for Latinos, provide accurate and helpful information about common Latino values and beliefs. **It will be a non-partisan organization—concerned with appropriate, honest and helpful information about the Iowa Latino Communities.**

Other ICLA mandates which will be mentioned, but not elaborated upon due to the timeline but information is available about them on our **ICLA Website** are:

*Conduct a survey of the Latino people in Iowa in order to access their concerns, issues and needs.*

*Maintain information on the qualifications of Spanish Language interpreters and maintain and provide a list of those deemed qualified to Iowa Courts, or administrative agencies as requested.*

**Our small but significant agency of Latino Affairs has long arms, deep commitment and energetic workers, staff and volunteers that daily work with Iowa Latinos to empower them to share their gifts, values, skills, their strengths and their love of Iowa. ICLA strives to provide Iowa Latinos opportunities to work hard, support their families and to rise in the world to make our nation MORE not less, AMERICAN. ICLA is recognized in Iowa and the Midwest for its progressive advocacy, education, information and commitment towards improving and enriching the lives of Iowa Latinos.**